



## **COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2020  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Clare Bailey MLA (via StarLeaf)  
Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA  
Mr John Blair MLA  
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA (via StarLeaf)  
Mr Harry Harvey MLA  
Mr William Irwin MLA  
Mr Patsy McGlone MLA (via StarLeaf)

In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk  
Ms Barbara Love, Committee Clerk  
Ms Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk  
Ms Marion Johnson, Clerical Supervisor  
Ms Kate Duffy, Clerical Officer

*The Committee commenced at 9.32 a.m. in Open Session*

#### **1. Apologies**

None

#### **2. Oral Evidence Session DAERA: Future Agricultural Policy and Basic Payment Scheme**

The following departmental officials joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 9.33 a.m.

Norman Fulton, Head of Food and Farming Group  
Rosemary Agnew, Director of Brexit

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

*Ms Bailey joined the meeting at 9.39 a.m.*

*Mr Blair joined the meeting at 9.40 a.m.*

*Mr Bradley joined the meeting at 9.58 a.m.*

*Mr Irwin joined the meeting at 10.12 a.m.*

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification on the date for the launch of the consultation on the future Rural Development Strategy.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request information on the number of applications from Young Farmers per year.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request if an extension to the deadline for the Environmental Farming Scheme on the grounds of extenuating circumstances can be considered.

*The meeting suspended at 10.12 a.m.*

*The meeting resumed at 10.18 a.m.*

### **3. Oral Evidence Session Ulster Farmers' Union: Future Agricultural Policy and Basic Payment Scheme**

The following representatives from the Ulster Farmers' Union joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 10.18 a.m.

Wesley Aston, Chief Executive  
Victor Chestnutt, President  
David Brown, Deputy President  
William Irvine, Deputy President

The representatives briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

*Mr Blair left the meeting at 11.17 a.m.*

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed a draft Press Release on the Future Agricultural Policy and Basic Payments Scheme and that it should issue.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request a research paper on a comparison of agricultural policies in other UK jurisdictions, the EU and other parts of the world. The Committee further agreed to have the research paper presented at the meeting on 17 December 2020.

#### **4. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson advised the Committee that a virtual informal meeting has been arranged for Tuesday 24 November 2020 at 1.00 p.m. with the Ulster Angling Federation. Members are advised to advise the clerk by close of play if they are able to attend.

#### **5. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2020**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2020.

#### **6. Matters arising**

None.

#### **7. Written Briefing DAERA: SL1 The Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020**

The Committee noted the SL1 The Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020 which will transpose four amending Circular Economy Package EU Directives: 2018/849; 2018/850; 2018/851 and 2018/852.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered the merits of the policy and agreed that it should move to the next legislative stage.

**8. Written briefing DAERA: SL1 The Waste (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The Committee noted the written briefing on the SL1 The Waste (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which will make a number of minor and technical amendments in order to implement the Protocol in terms of packaging and waste.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the merits of the policy and agreed that it should proceed to the next legislative stage.

**9. Written briefing DAERA: SL1 The EU Fertilising Products Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The Committee noted the written briefing on SL1 The EU Fertilising Products Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which will support the implementation of Articles 20 to 36 of Regulations (EU) 2019/1009 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules on the making available on the market of EU fertilizing products in Northern Ireland.

*Mr Blair rejoined the meeting at 11.23 a.m.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification on the designation of the Secretary of State for DEFRA as the notifying authority for Northern Ireland to ensure compliance with EU law after the end of the Transition Period.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the merits of the policy and agreed that it should proceed to the next legislative stage.

**10. Written Briefing DAERA: SL1 The Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases and Ozone Depleting Substances (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The Committee noted the written briefing on SL1 The Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases and Ozone Depleting Substances (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which will implement the Protocol by amending existing regulations aimed at minimising emissions of fluorinated gases and ozone depleting substances used in a number of products and equipment by businesses.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the merits of the policy and agreed that it should proceed to the next legislative stage.

**11. Written Briefing: SI The Common Fisheries Policy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) (No.2) Regulations 2020 (Category 2)**

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 11.26 a.m.

David Steele, Grade 7 Fisheries Bill Team  
Patrick Smith, Deputy Principal, Sea Fisheries Policy & Grants  
Ciaran Cunningham, Grade 7, Acting Head of Marine and Fisheries Transition, Team.

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

*Agreed:* The Committee wishes it to be clearly understood that due to the lack of information on SI CFP/20: The Common Fisheries Policy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) (No 2.) Regulations (Category 2) and the limited time it has had to consider it, it has been unable to fully explore and understand the potential impacts and implications to this jurisdiction. This difficulty has been further compounded by the fact that it is being asked to do so in the context of the legal uncertainties around the UK Internal Market Bill and the Withdrawal Agreement.

**12. Written Briefing: SI The Control of Mercury (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020**

The following departmental official joined the meeting at 11.40 a.m.

Alison Jeynes, Assistant Director, Radioactivity & Contaminated Land Branch

The official briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification on the impact the SI may have on the availability of mercury which is used for floating beams in historic lighthouses.

*Agreed:* The Committee wishes it to be clearly understood that due to lack of information on SI The Control of Mercury (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 and the limited

time that it has had to consider it, it has been unable to fully explore and understand the potential impacts and implications for this jurisdiction. This difficulty has been further compounded by the fact that it is being asked to do so in the context of the legal uncertainties around the UK Internal Market Bill and the Withdrawal Agreement.

### **13. Written Briefing DAERA: Common Framework for Chemicals and Pesticides**

The Committee noted the written briefing on the Common Framework for Chemicals and Pesticides. The Committee further noted that the Framework is moving to Phase 3: The review and consultation stage of framework development.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an oral briefing on the Framework for the meeting on 3 December 2020.

### **14. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following:

- i. The Northern Ireland Forest Service Annual Report and Accounts 2019/2020.
- ii. Copied correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office to Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP requesting written evidence on issues related to the future relationship with the European Union following Brexit.
- iii. Correspondence from The Executive Office to the NICS on revised administrative guidance for EU Exit Transition Period Statutory Instruments, including specific guidance on draft affirmative Statutory Instruments.
- iv. Correspondence from the Finance Committee on the development of the Peace Plus Programme.
- v. Correspondence from the Department on the weekly update on the Statutory Instruments laid at Westminster week commencing 8 November 2020.
- vi. Correspondence from the DAERA Minister advising that the UKG Agriculture Bill has now received Royal Assent.

The Committee considered an invitation from the DAERA Minister to the CAFRE Hill Farm Centre at Glenwherry.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the visit until guidance on external committee visits and an

appropriate risk assessment process has been finalised by the NI Assembly.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on the launch of the Clean Air Strategy Discussion Document which was subsequently postponed as advised in further correspondence.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a summary of the responses once the Discussion Document is launched.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on the opening of Tranche 3 of the Capital Tier 1 of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update after the scheme has closed on the numbers and awarding of grants.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation (NIFF) on the DEFRA Consultation on Apportioning Additional Quota between the UK Administrations expressing Concerns about the detrimental impact on the local fishing industry.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Secretary of State for the EFRA and the UK Fisheries Minister to echo the concerns as highlighted by NIFF.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Ulster Angling Federation on the recent landslip at Meenbog Windfarm.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an urgent oral briefing on the issue.

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## **15. Forward Work Programme**

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The Committee discussed the draft Forward Work Programme and noted that oral briefings on a number of major strategies and policies have now been confirmed.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to invite Rural Community Network, Rural, Rural Action and NI Rural Women's Network to present oral evidence on the Future Rural Development Strategy at the meeting on 26 November 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to start the meeting on 17 December 2020 at the earlier time of 9.15 a.m. in order to accommodate the Minister who has an Executive meeting to attend later that day.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request an oral briefing on Project Stratum for the meeting on 10 December 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

#### **16. AOB**

None.

#### **17. Date, time and place of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural affairs will take place on Thursday 26 November 2020 at 9.30 a.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting adjourned at 11.48 a.m.*

  
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Declan McAleer, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

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Date